

The Influence  
of Velasquez  
on Modern  
Painting  
*The American  
Experience*



JULY 3 – DECEMBER 1, 2000

### GALLERY ENTRANCE

Marriner S. Eccles  
Federal Reserve Board Building  
C Street between 20th and  
21st Streets, NW  
Washington, DC 20551

### OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.,  
Monday through Friday,  
or by calling (202) 452-3686

Front cover: No. 5, William Merritt Chase, *An Infanta, A Souvenir of Velasquez*, 1899  
Back cover: No. 6, William Merritt Chase, *Infanta, after Velasquez*, c. 1881



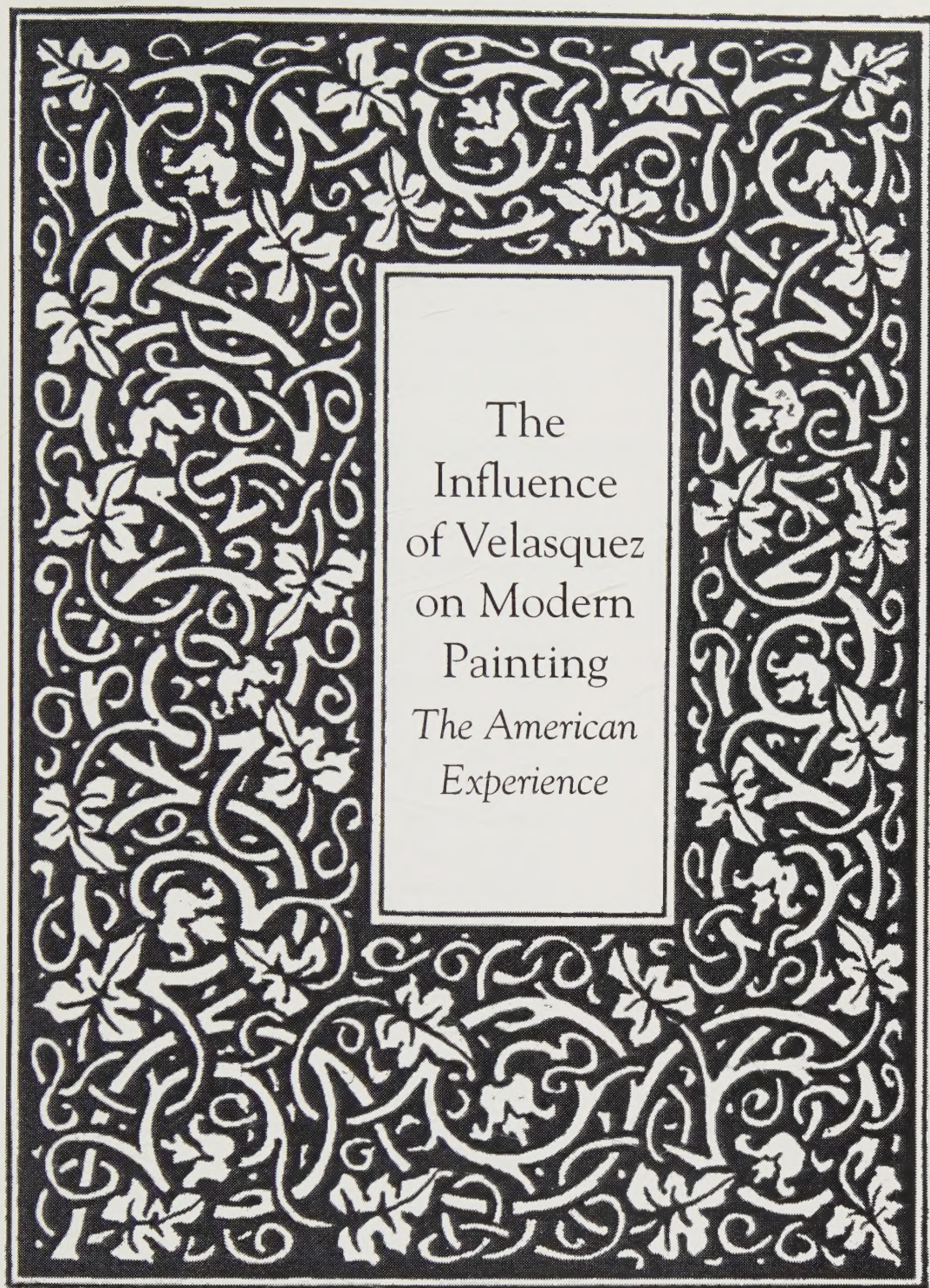


Figure 1, detail, Elbert Hubbard,  
*Little Journeys to the Homes of Eminent Artists, Velasquez, 1902*

JULY 3 – DECEMBER 1, 2000





## HONORARY PATRON

Honorable Antonio de Oyarzabal, *Ambassador from Spain*

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

Alan Greenspan, *Chairman*

Roger W. Ferguson, Jr., *Vice Chairman*

Edward W. Kelley, Jr.

Laurence H. Meyer

Edward M. Gramlich

## FINE ARTS ADVISORY PANEL

Roselyne C. Swig, *Chairman*

Richard E. Oldenburg, *Vice Chairman*

Therese D. Harris, *Secretary*

Ronald D. Abramson

Diane L. Ackerman

Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

J. Carter Brown

Charlotte Ferst

Mrs. Ina Ginsburg

Ruth B. Gramlich

Gerald D. Hines

Robert C. Holland

Richard Kelly

Mrs. Jacqueline Leland

G. William Miller

Earl A. Powell III


Richard Shack

A. Jess Shenson, M.D.

John C. Whitehead

Harold M. Williams

Mary Anne Goley, *Fine Arts Program Director*



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2023 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

# The Influence of Velasquez on Modern Painting *The American Experience*

MARY ANNE GOLEY

**T**he Spanish master, Diego Velasquez (1599–1660) was perhaps equally important in death as in life to painters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who viewed themselves as progressive and independent of the academy. The dominance of the French *école des beaux-arts* system of education with its structured program was, metaphorically speaking, uprooted by Edouard Manet, overturned by the Impressionists, and leveled by the introduction of a rival salon in 1890. Velasquez's legacy was

an important element in the modernization of a painter's education. The re-emergence of Velasquez's reputation in the late nineteenth century can be attributed to a plethora of new publications on his art and life, as well as to the Paris-based teachings of two contemporary French masters, Leon Bonnat (1833–1922) and Carolus-Duran (1838–1917). From them, a younger generation of American painters learned the lessons of the Spanish master and applied them in the development of their own work as portrait and figure painters. The pursuit of the modern may in fact have been easier for Americans, who were not bound by the French academic system and its emphasis on draftsmanship and the need for "finish" that called for a systematic series of preparatory oil sketches.

In the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the work of Velasquez was held up as an example of modern picture making. The American William Merritt Chase credited Velasquez with being "the most modern" of all the old masters.<sup>1</sup> Though the lessons of Velasquez were viewed as a means of becoming a modern painter, he was not the only old master whose work was studied by American painters pursuing the modern—lessons were also to be learned from Frans Hals, El Greco, and Rembrandt. However, the purpose of this exhibition is to look at what Americans learned from Velasquez and applied to the development of their own style.

What then was it that Velasquez's works had to offer progressive painters? Austere and uncluttered spaces, particularly those found in *Las Meninas* and *Calabazas*, were inspirational to painters who were inclined to discard the clutter and detail of Victorian aesthetics in favor of formal concerns. Many tried to emulate the spatial dynamics of Velasquez's *Calabazas*. To do so they

---

1. William Merritt Chase, "Velasquez," *The Quartier Latin*, vol. 1, no. 1 (July 1896), p. 4.



had to apply Velasquez's emphasis on color harmonies of a single dominant tone. He favored half tones in brown for the background and black for the costume. Edouard Manet described it best when he characterized the spatial dynamics of *Calabazas*: "[it] is the most astonishing piece of painting ever done. The background vanishes and atmosphere envelops the good man, a vital presence dressed in black."<sup>2</sup>

A second lesson was Velasquez's realism. His was not a meticulous realism but rather realism in the rustic street types that he chose as his subjects. His figures were the opposite of the classical ideal. Velasquez's models were real people. Charles Perkins, a Bostonian and one of the earliest professional art historians in America, said of Velasquez's subjects, for example the court dwarfs, "that they were premier examples of the beauty of ugliness. That Velasquez painted ugliness, as he saw it, neither more nor less."<sup>3</sup>

These lessons from Velasquez were best learned by making a visit to the Prado, where artists would copy directly from his originals. The Prado kept a registry of the artists and the paintings that they copied. It is worth noting, however, that the absence of a name in the registry does not necessarily mean that an artist was never influenced by Velasquez. The American figure painter, John White Alexander, for example, did not make copies of Velasquez's work, but he did collect post cards. Alexander owned a post card of *Infanta Margarita*, which was a visual source for this 1893 salon entry *Portrait Gris* (Musée d'Orsay), a portrait of a modern woman in a full-skirted grey dress with rows of white banding.

Interest in Velasquez was well served by the multitude of publications beginning in the 1880s, many of which were in English and available to Americans, particularly those studying in Paris. Earlier still was *The Life and Times of Velasquez* by William Stirling Maxwell, which was excerpted in 1855 in *The Crayon*—a new English journal available in America.

Beginning in 1881, there were new publications by Adolfo Venturi, Charles Curtis, Paule Lefort, Carl Justi, and Aureliano Beruete. Lefort, Justi, and Beruete shared the opinion that Velasquez was regarded as the supreme realist and father of modern art. In contrast, Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson, a nephew of Robert Louis Stevenson who had studied with Carolus-Duran, saw connections between Velasquez and the technique of the contemporary impressionists in France, and in 1899 he referred to Velasquez as a proto-impressionist.<sup>4</sup>

2. Carol M. Osborne, "Yankee Painters at the Prado," in *Spain, Espagne, Spanien, Foreign Artists Discover Spain, 1800–1900*, an exhibition curated by Suzanne Stratton (New York City: The Equitable Gallery in association with the Spanish Institute, 1993), p. 67.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

4. R.A.M. Stevenson, *Velasquez* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1895).



The influential American journalist Royal Cortissoz wrote an article for the May 1895 issue of *Harper's Magazine* in which he called *Las Meninas* "the most perfect study of color and values" that existed.<sup>5</sup> Elbert Hubbard, the charismatic leader of an arts and crafts movement based in East Aurora, New York, published a book on Velasquez in 1902 (Figure 1). Charles Caffin's influential book *The Story of American Painting* (1907) includes a chapter on realism in which he discusses Gustave Courbet, Manet, and Velasquez. He summarizes the stylistic influences of Velasquez, which are universally acknowledged as being realism, dark colors, and nuances of tone to create an enveloping atmosphere. One last publication that was important to Americans who admired Velasquez was James Huneker's *Promenades of an Impressionist*, published in 1910.

For their academic training during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, American painters favored the Parisian ateliers of two contemporary French masters, Leon Bonnat and Carolus-Duran, both of whom beatified Velasquez to their students. The unstructured form of education reflected the anti-academic sentiment of the teachers. This manner of instruction was particularly appealing to Americans, who made up the largest foreign student enrollment. Either by direct contact or by word of mouth, these two masters were probably single-handedly responsible for the decision by American students to make the pilgrimage to Spain to copy Velasquez's work in the Prado.

Both Frenchmen lived in Spain for a short time, where they came in direct contact with the work of Velasquez. To his students, Bonnat praised Velasquez for the way he revealed the reddish to brown ground through thinly painted passages and for the abrupt juxtaposition of light and dark tones. This technique was not unfamiliar to Americans who had first studied in Munich. Carolus-Duran is famous for his statement, "Velasquez, Velasquez, Velasquez, ceaselessly study Velasquez." He set an example in his own work by painting directly on canvas and eliminating the need for preliminary drawing and the preparatory oil sketch, or *ébauche*. He structured his form through a scheme of values or tones of light and dark.

This exhibition focuses on a small selection of American artists who were influenced by the innovations of Velasquez. Where possible, a copy is presented along with a mature work. This is the case for the work of John S. Sargent, William M. Chase, Frank Duveneck, Denman Ross, and Ruth H. Bohan. Time has not been kind to such copies. They hold little historical interest because they are not original compositions. Those that have sur-

---

5. Coincidentally, the Prado Register of Visiting Artists lists Royal Cortissoz as copying not Velasquez but a painting by Titian on June 4, 1894. This is the only listing of Cortissoz in the Prado Register in the 1890s.



vived typically have not been properly cared for, and some have been destroyed. Many remain unlocated or unattributable.

---

JOHN SINGER SARGENT (1856–1925), Carolus-Duran's most prized student, took to heart the encouraging words of his teacher to ceaselessly study Velasquez. A review of Sargent's early work reveals how important Velasquez was to Sargent's formalist approach to composition and to his pictorial ideas. Both Richard Ormond, one of the authors of the catalogue raisonné of Sargent's work and American art historian Marc Simpson, who has written on Sargent, confess to the elusiveness of identifying specific influences. The difficulty may be attributed, in part, to the fact that the realm of influence is formal rather than literal.

Sargent was one of the very first of this younger generation of American painters from the last quarter of the nineteenth century who made the journey to Madrid in pursuit of modern ideas about painting. Most of his copies of Velasquez's work are thought to date from his first trip in 1879. His known copies include *Las Meninas*, *The Spinners*, *The Dwarf*, *Don Antonio El Ingles*, *The Buffoon*, *Head of Aesop*, *Apollo*, *Prince Baltasar Carlos*, *Martines Montanes*, *Philip IV*, and *Infanta Margarita*. Sargent appropriated all the recognized



Figure 2, Reproduction of *Detail of the Spinners after Velasquez* by John Singer Sargent, from the Beit Collection, courtesy of the Alfred Beit Foundation



lessons of the master: spatial dynamics, use of half tones, a preference for the color black, and handling of the brush.

Although Sargent's copy of *Las Meninas*, one-third the size of the original, is faithful to the original composition, it is distinctive in Sargent's handling of white pigment to create brilliant highlights such as that on the Infanta's face. Much has been made of Sargent's portrait of the Boit family and its composition, which is indebted to the spatial dynamics of *Las Meninas*. Sargent creates pockets of space in which he individualizes the character of each of his four subjects.

However, *The Spinners* is a composition that may have held more mystery for Sargent and in turn contributed to a new body of work. His copy is informative because of what he chooses to leave out. He ignores the left side and the far right figure of Velasquez's canvas. In his copy, Sargent leads the eye into the picture with the spinner whose extended left arm is the diagonal that connects fore, middle, and background. This manner of composition is a textbook application of a formal device dating from the Renaissance. While Sargent is pursuing the lessons of the past by making copies from Velasquez, he is also painting subjects from the present as verified in a studio photograph featuring both the 1884 easel painting *Breakfast Table* and the copy of *The Spinners*.

American critic James Huneker was as astute as Sargent in the differences he found between *Las Meninas* and *The Spinners* (Figure 2). Huneker observed, when comparing both paintings, that the latter is "rhythmically more involved and contrapuntal than the maids—this canvas—with its brilliant broken lights, its air that circulates, its tender yet potent conducting of the eye from the rounded arm of the seductive girl at the loom through the arched area."<sup>6</sup> So, too, for Sargent. It was surely the rounded arm of *The Spinners* that fueled Sargent's creative genius shortly thereafter.

The palpable space that is created by the eye as it follows the rounded arm sustains Sargent's creative instincts beginning with his trip to Spain, continuing while he was in Venice, and culminating when he returned to Paris. For example, in *Venetian Onion Seller* (Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum) Sargent creates an opening onto a distant view and uses the bent elbow of his model to extend the depth of field. The same formal device used by Velasquez in several paintings dating from his Seville period, such as *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* and *Supper at Emmaus*, is adapted by Sargent.

It is as if Sargent discovered and experimented with an appendage of the body—the arm—so that it gives direction and defines space as it catches the

---

6. James Huneker, *Promenades of an Impressionist* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 385.



No. 22, John Singer Sargent  
*Study for Spanish Dancer*, c. 1882

light. In several of his compositions, Sargent directs the eye inward by leading with the rounded arm; *The Spanish Dance* (1879–80), *El Jaleo* (1882), *Study for Spanish Dancer* (c. 1882) (No. 21), *Spanish Dancer* (1880–81), and *Madame Gautreau Drinking* (c. 1883). The aforementioned series of compositional exercises with the arm may have guided Sargent in finding a resolution of the composition of *Madame X*. Whereas Sargent extends the arm in *Madame Gautreau Drinking*, he drops it in *Madame X*, his scandalous salon painting of 1883. Furthermore the space within which *Madame X* stands is indebted to Velasquez's spatial innovations found in *Calabazas*.

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE (1849–1916) was one of Velasquez's most ardent admirers. Unlike Sargent's, Chase's admiration was expressed and sustained well beyond his student days and even after he had achieved great success and international renown as a painter and teacher. He first visited Madrid in 1881 and made repeat visits in 1882, 1883, and 1896.

Chase's copy of the young *Infanta Margarita* probably dates from one of his early trips to Spain. The emphasis in this copy is on costume and hot colors, with his interests more focused on the decorative (No. 6). The composition is centered on a single plane. Hunecker describes what was appealing to Chase about Velasquez's *Infanta Margarita*: "She is the exquisite and lyric Velasquez . . . there are grays that felicitously sing across alien strawberry tints."<sup>7</sup> Hunecker continues by characterizing the subject as the "crinolined princess with her spangles."

On one of his early trips, Chase mastered the most challenging of Velasquez's paintings. In *An Actor*, Chase applied the lessons of *Calabazas* by painting a black shadow to give weight to the figure that occupies the space that is defined by the subtle juxtapositions of brown tones (No. 4). Sometimes a painted black shadow can take on a presence of its own, as it did in Manet's *The Tragic Actor* (1865–66), also indebted to *Calabazas*. In some later por-

7. Ibid., p. 387.



traits Chase devised a variation on the space found in *Calabasas*. He would compose the lines of individual floorboards at an angle leading to a figure placed back from the picture plane. Also on one of his early trips, Chase copied the head of Velasquez's full-length figure in *The Buffoon, Don Juan de Austria*, as did Sargent (No. 7). Chase's copy has a greater sense of the physicality of paint, whereas Sargent's copy is rendered with a quick and fluid touch.

Velasquez remained an important inspiration for Chase in the 1890s, when Chase was living in Shinnecock, Long Island, and painting some of his most successful pictures. In January 1896, after auctioning the contents of his Tenth Street studio for financial reasons, Chase went to Madrid for the school term. He registered to copy *Las Meninas* on February 29.<sup>8</sup> His students Reynolds Beal and Addison T. Millar accompanied him to Madrid.<sup>9</sup> Returning to New York at the end of the school term, Chase resigned from the faculty of the Art Students League, where he had been teaching since 1878. His intent was to return to Madrid to establish an American school. In the summer of 1896, during a lecture before the American Art Association of Paris, he called Velasquez the "most modern of the old masters." He further complimented Velasquez as a "true genius" and admired him "for casting aside the dogmas and formulae of the schools of his day."<sup>10</sup> In 1899, some eighteen years later, Chase replicated the costume and pose of the child Infanta in a portrait of his four-year-old daughter, Helen Velasquez Chase. The portrait recalls Hunecker's description of a crinolined princess in strawberry tints. Chase titled the painting *An Infanta, A Souvenir of Velasquez* (No. 5).

By 1906, when Chase's career had ebbed and his creative energy was flagging, he submitted two of his copies—*Las Meninas* and *The Spinners*—to an exhibition of copies of old modern painters in Boston at the Copley Society.<sup>11</sup> In an unidentified news story about the Copley Society exhibition, probably *The New York Times*, the headline read: "William M. Chase Has Place of Honor." In the March 7, 1906, edition of the *Boston Evening Transcript* it was written, "These copyists have gone Velasquez Mad, for about 1/3 of the canvases are Velasquez copies," and of Chase's two full-sized copies, "Better copies of these two unequaled masterpieces have never been made."

8. The Prado Register of Visiting Artists, February 29, 1896, although Chase's copy of *The Spinners* is not listed in the register between February and June of 1896.

9. The Prado Register of Visiting Artists lists Reynolds Beal on February 20, 22, and 29, and March 7 and 18. Addison T. Millar is listed once, on April 15.

10. Chase, *The Quartier Latin*, p. 4.

11. Copley Society, *Exhibition of Copies of Old Masters by Modern Painters*, Copley Hall, Boston, 1906 lists Chase's copies of *Las Meninas*, no. 14, and *La Fabrica de Tapices O Las Hilanderas (The Spinners)*, no. 34.

FRANK DUENECK (1848–1919) was one of the first American instructors to make brushwork instead of crayon drawing the foundation of his picture. Dueneck was introduced to this modern technique in Munich in the early 1870s, when he was a student at the Royal Academy at the same time as Chase. Thereafter, an exhibition of five of his paintings at the Boston Art Club in 1875 earned him his reputation as a progressive artist. His technique of revealing the reddish-brown ground, though characteristic of the Munich-trained painters, is a modern-day improvement upon Velasquez's techniques. The exhibition received rave reviews in Boston and New York. Henry James, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, characterized Dueneck's paintings as having "extreme naturalness" and "unredeemed reality."<sup>12</sup>

At the time of the Boston exhibit, Dueneck was preparing to return to Munich. There he would make a career of teaching the younger Americans—a generation fictionalized by William Dean Howells as Dueneck's Boys. Dueneck married in 1886, at the height of his career, and until his wife's unexpected death two years later, he painted some of his finest pictures—for example, *Well and Water Tank, Italian Villa* of 1887 (No. 15).<sup>13</sup> Instead of having a somber Munich palette, Dueneck's painting is a beautiful, sun-drenched Italian scene with all the immediacy of having been painted outdoors in direct sunlight.

A triumph of Dueneck's painting is the full-length portrait of his wife, Elizabeth Boott (Cincinnati Art Museum), finished weeks before her death in 1888. A studio piece, it is a reminder of the lessons learned from *Calabazas*, with its tonal variations of color from light brown to chocolate and the varying brushstrokes that distinguish the floor from the wall.

Two years later, Dueneck painted a portrait of his son that lacks the vibrant spirit of the portrait of his wife. The dark palette gives it an old master look. An obvious appropriation from Velasquez is the bold shape of a white pinafore, which is a contemporary interpretation of the hooped skirts of the Infanta. The shape and color of the skirt are motifs frequently repeated by artists when children are the subjects.

In the 1890s, Dueneck lived an itinerant life, traveling to Europe frequently while still teaching in Cincinnati. From April to June 1895, he registered at

12. Elizabeth Wylie, "Frank Dueneck and His Circle from Bavaria to Venice," in *Explorations in Realism: 1870–1880*, Framingham, MA: Danforth Museum of Art, Apr. 21–July 2, 1989, p. 44.

13. This painting was held in high regard by Charles Caffin, who reproduced it on page 112 of his book *The Story of American Painting* (1907). At that time it was in the collection of the Cincinnati Museum Association.





No. 13, Frank Duveneck, *Philip IV as a Hunter after Velasquez*, 1895

the Prado to copy Velasquez. On this trip, Duveneck copied *Calabasas*, *Philip IV as a Hunter*, and three other paintings.<sup>14</sup> The copy of *Philip IV* is comparable in size to Velasquez's original and is virtually identical in composition (No. 13). The painted surface, like that in the portrait of his son, lacks the vitality of the portrait of his wife and of *Well and Water Tank*. His two biographers shed no light on the reasons for this trip, thus leaving room for supposition. Was this first trip to Madrid that of a failing spirit looking to revitalize a lackluster body of work? Or, as Michael Quick has written, was Duveneck's low productivity due to the fact that he was comfortably living off his wife's bequest?<sup>15</sup>

---

WILLIAM DANNAT (1853–1929) was a bit younger than Chase and Duveneck. He studied with Duveneck in Munich in the mid-1870s, and he developed a keen interest in Spanish art and culture. As early as 1878 he traveled to Madrid to copy Velasquez. In April 1878, he registered to copy *Philip IV*, *Prince Baltasar Carlos*, and an unidentified head. It was after this trip that he studied with Carolus-Duran in Paris.

In one of his earliest original compositions, *Aragonese Smuggler* (1883), Dannat is interested in both the formal lessons of composition learned from *Calabasas* and in the realism of Spanish rustic types. This interest is evident in both the finished painting (Musée d'Orsay) and the study (No. 10). Subsequently he painted *The Quartette* (Metropolitan Museum of Art), a figurative subject that was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1884, a study of which is featured in this exhibit (No. 12). He drew from real life to render a genre scene of four performers—three seated in a row with their backs to the wall and one standing against the wall. The lessons of Velasquez did not escape the eye of American critic William C. Brownell, who wrote of this salon picture that it “was inspired by Velasquez's austere spaces and monochromatic palette as well as the seventeenth century master's love of rustic types.”<sup>16</sup> Reviews such as this helped propel Dannat's career.

Dannat did not limit his interests to rustic types, as seen in the oil sketch for *Study for La Femme en Rouge* (Musée d'Orsay) (No. 11). The subject of this 1889 canvas is a refined and elegant lady with a comb in her hair wearing an unadorned red gown and a sheer, fringed shawl draped over her shoulders. Both the sketch and the finished painting are a study in color harmony with the red dress as the means for exploration of tone. One reviewer wrote of the

---

14. A listing of copies can be found in the Inventory of American Paintings, Smithsonian Institution.

15. Michael Quick, *An American Painter Abroad: Frank Duveneck's European Years* (Cincinnati Art Museum, 1987), p. 95.

16. William C. Brownell, *Magazine of Art*, vol. 7, (September, 1884), p. 493.

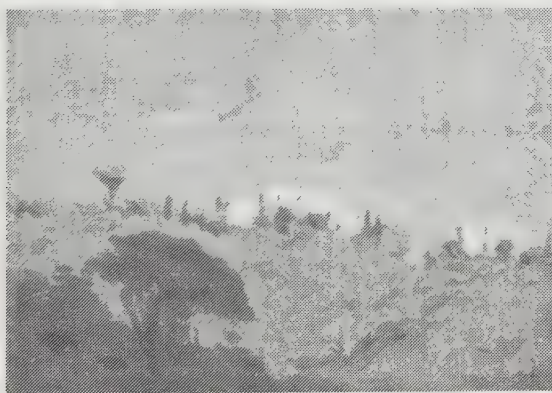


salon picture that it demonstrated “a great sureness of hand and the most delicious talent.”<sup>17</sup> With a dramatic profile and cool flesh tones, it is Dannat’s version of Sargent’s *Madame X*.

At the time of the 1893 World Colombian Exposition in Chicago, Dannat was still interested in Spanish subjects. He exhibited a canvas titled *Spanish Women* (unlocated). The composition is of women seated in chairs lined up against a wall—reminiscent of Sargent’s *El Jaleo*. But unlike the work of Velasquez and Sargent, Dannat’s picture was described by the press as having iridescent and neon color, a distinction not appropriate for an admirer of Velasquez’s half tones.<sup>18</sup>

---

DENMAN ROSS (1853–1935), a contemporary of Dannat, was regarded as an amateur painter, having studied briefly at the Academie Julian in Paris. Like Duveneck and Chase, he is remembered for his long teaching career—in this case at Harvard. As did others before him, Ross made a study of Velasquez’s use of half tones to understand how nuances of color shape form. Ross developed his ideas in the courses on the theory of design that he taught at Harvard beginning in 1899. His trip to Madrid in 1895 certainly must have helped solidify his ideas. He ultimately copyrighted his theories in a 1902 publication, *A Theory of Tone-Relations*, that charts red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, and neutral in terms of density and value ranging from white to black. He discussed “reducing the possibilities of the palette



No. 19, Denman Ross,  
*Italian Landscape with Volcano*, 1893

---

17. Andre Michel, *Journal de Debats* (September 22, 1889), reprinted in *Reports of the United States Commissioners to the Universal Exposition of 1889 at Paris*, vol. 3, (Washington, D.C., 1891), p. 110.

18. *Revisiting the White City, American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, organized by Carolyn Kinder Carr and George Gurney, National Museum of American Art and the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C., 1993), p. 104.

so as to think in tone-relations," and wrote that "a palette of infinite possibilities is unnecessary and undesirable."<sup>19</sup> These lessons had already been applied in *Italian Landscape with Volcano*, a small painting of 1893 (No. 19). It is a tonalist study with the primary color and undertone being white, even when the green of the trees is added. There is a rapidity and looseness of execution that is specific to Ross. His personal manner of execution is seen again in his copy of Velasquez's *Count Duke Olivares on Horseback*, which he probably made during his visit to Madrid in 1895 (No. 18).

Ross is registered as a copyist of several pictures by Velasquez in October 1895: a landscape, two studies, *Prince Baltasar*, and a portrait.<sup>20</sup> He thought well enough of his copies to exhibit three of them in the Copley Society *Exhibition of Copies of Old Masters by Modern Painters* in 1906. They were *Bobo Di Coria* (Harvard University Art Museums), *Count Duke Olivares on Horseback* (Harvard University Art Museums), and *Infante Don Carlo* (Harvard University Art Museums). None of the three is identified by name in the register of copyists though *Infante Don Carlo* is dated 1895, the year Ross was in Madrid making copies. Ross, as did Chase, continued to learn from Velasquez well after his career was established.

---

RICHARD E. MILLER (1875–1943), known for his impressionist paintings of women in intimate settings, represents another generation of American painters who valued the lessons of Velasquez. As a student at the Academie Julian in 1899, he would have been made aware of the importance of the Spanish master by his fellow students and teachers. Whistler had a profound influence on Miller beginning in 1902. It is from the American expatriate that Miller learned "a highly original interpretation of European realism, stemming in particular from the Spanish master Velasquez."<sup>21</sup>

The influence of the Spanish master is attested to in a charcoal drawing rendered about 1907 and later in a painting from the 1930s. The drawing is a study in light and dark of a detail from *The Feast of Bacchus*. It remains to be documented as to whether Miller made the sketch from the painting itself or from reproductions found in the many publications that were available. In a painting from the 1930s, Miller cleverly places a canvas within a canvas. He paints a detail from Velasquez's *The Spinners*, which rests on a table behind a teapot and bowl of fruit (No. 17). Like Sargent, Miller chose to paint the detail of the figure with the extended arm leading inward.

---

19. Marie Danforth Page papers, 1893–1983, roll 4072, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

20. The Prado Register of Visiting Artists, October 8, 10, 16, 22, and 29.

21. Marie Louise Kane, *A Bright Oasis, The Paintings of Richard E. Miller (1875–1943)*, Jordan-Volpe Gallery (New York, 1997), p. 15.



No. 18, Denman Ross, *Count Duke Olivares on Horseback*, c. 1895

The fascination with Velasquez continued well into the new century advanced by exhibitions such as the 1906 Copley Society exhibition in Boston. The importance of Velasquez was promoted by art schools that encouraged their students to look at the work of the master. One case in point is that of Ruth Harris Bohan of Kansas City, Missouri, who studied at the Kansas City Art Institute.

RUTH HARRIS BOHAN (1891–1981) was an art student in a city that benefited culturally from the largesse of an enlightened citizen by the name of



William R. Nelson. Nelson gave a collection of mostly old master copies to Kansas City in 1896, calling it the Western Gallery of Art. His intent was altruistic in that he gave the collection to benefit the citizens of Kansas City.<sup>22</sup> The copies were originally exhibited in the public library, and Bohan no doubt would have seen the collection, which included Chase's copy of *Las Meninas* and *The Spinners*, added sometime after the 1906 Boston exhibit and by the time of Nelson's death in 1915.<sup>23</sup>

The wife of a prominent Kansas City physician, Bohan accompanied her husband to Vienna in 1920 and again in 1925. While Dr. Bohan studied with Freud, she visited the Kunsthistorisches Museum.<sup>24</sup> One of the paintings she copied was *Infanta Margarita (No. 1)*. Bohan's interest in things Spanish is reflected in another painting, *Spanish Dancer (No. 3)*. The picturesque costuming and dramatic lighting, with a high contrast of dark and light, is reminiscent of Sargent's painting of the same title, although no longer novel in a canvas dated after 1920. Bohan's acquired facility and confidence in her medium is seen at its best in the accomplished portrait pastel of *Jeannette Peet (No. 2)*.

---

Velasquez's effect on painters who sought to be modern was omnipresent at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. In hindsight, this was an era of tumultuous change and transition for the future of

---

22. The history of William R. Nelson's gift to the city is detailed in Michael Churchman and Scott Erbes, *High Ideals and Aspirations, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 1933-1993*, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, 1993. Nelson continued to add to the collection, for example, Chase's copies of *Las Meninas* and *The Spinners*. In 1930, as the plans for the new Nelson Gallery were being made, the trustees agreed to keep the collection of copies, which remained on the walls of the museum until 1942. The location of Chase's copies of *Las Meninas* and *The Spinners* after 1942 is unknown, and unfortunately there are no photographic records.

23. Katherine Roof, an early biographer of Chase erroneously listed on p.329 old master copies including *Las Meninas* but not *The Spinners* as belonging to a Nelson Collection in Indianapolis. This error was not corrected until the Churchman and Erbes publication of 1993, which had small distribution. The author would like to thank Julie Aronson, currently curator of American Painting and Sculpture, Cincinnati Art Museum, and formerly assistant curator of American Art at the Nelson-Atkins Gallery, who pointed out the existence of the Nelson Collection as belonging to the Nelson-Atkins Gallery. Chase is listed as the owner of *Las Meninas* and *The Spinners* in the Copley Society, *Exhibition of Copies of Old Masters by Modern Painters*. Sometime afterward they entered the Nelson collection of old master copies. Perhaps Chase brought them to the attention of Nelson while painting his portrait in 1907. A biography of Nelson, written by the staff of the *Kansas City Star* and published in the year of his death, mentions the two copies on page 180.

24. "Obituary for Dr. P.T. Bohan," *Kansas City Star*, October 3, 1955.

painting. The structured program and systematic rules of order espoused by the French academy had outlived their usefulness. So-called modern painting, embracing a range of expressions and techniques, was welcomed at the more democratic Salon du Champs-de-Mars, founded in 1890. The lessons of Velasquez were essential to this change.

Some of America's finest impressionist and modernist painters improved their skills and gained self-confidence by studying Velasquez. Among them were Frederic Porter Vinton and J. Carroll Beckwith, who were traveling companions of William M. Chase in the early 1880s. In 1878, two American students of Leon Bonnat—Alfred Q. Collins and Walter Gay—traveled to Madrid to study Velasquez at the behest of their teacher. Charles Mills and Charles Forbes traveled to Madrid in March of 1886, missing the wedding of their friend Frank Duveneck.<sup>25</sup>

ALICE PIKE BARNEY (1857–1931), known for her symbolist paintings of the femme fatale, came under the direct influence of Carolus-Duran in 1887 and 1888. She, too, heeded his mantra to “ceaselessly study Velasquez,” as seen in her psychologically penetrating study of Velasquez's *Infanta* (National Museum of American Art), with its reverberating head executed in a manner that is a forerunner of Francis Bacon.

FREDERICK MACMONNIES (1863–1937), an internationally acclaimed sculptor, looked to Velasquez's work around 1904 when he decided to resume painting, a medium he had abandoned as a young artist. Though he applied himself to making copies, it is in a series of self-portraits that he reveals his affinity for and admiration of Velasquez. In a lost portrait entitled *Self-Portrait as Velasquez Made Me See Myself*, he proclaims his identification with the master.<sup>26</sup> While the facileness of the brushwork is impressionistic, the somber palette, with the illuminated face emerging from darkness, is not.

MAX WEBER (1881–1961), who is identified with the American modernist movement (as distinguished from the general use of the term “modern” throughout this essay), was associated with the artistic circles of Gertrude Stein in Paris and Alfred Stieglitz in New York. The study of Velasquez was important to the formation of Weber's career, as is evidenced in his 1906 copy of *Las Meninas* (No. 22). While still in Paris, he attended the school that Henri Matisse opened in 1908; and shortly thereafter he returned to New York, where he exhibited at Gallery 291.

25. William W. Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher* (Education Industries Inc., 1981), p.133.

26. Mary Smart, *A Flight with Fame: The Life and Art of Frederick MacMonnies, 1863–1937*, with a catalogue raisonné of sculpture and a checklist of paintings by E. Adina Gordon (Sound View Press, 1996), illus., p. 327.



No. 16, George Luks, *Jenny McKean as Infanta*, 1926

With the ascendancy of the Ashcan school and the American realist movement led by Robert Henri, Velasquez's rustic street types became a standard. GEORGE LUKS (1866–1933), who was associated with this movement, painted *Jenny McKean* as an Infanta of the time (No. 16). A diminutive child, dressed in a large print dress with a full skirt, leans against an oversized Spanish-style chair.

Pictures from the 1920s, such as the portrait of *Jenny McKean*, are the result of the path to modernism that began in the previous century. Velasquez remains an essential visual source and a model for other artists, not only when they begin their careers (for example, Sargent, Bohan, and Weber)



but also throughout their careers (for example, Chase). Artists have looked to Velasquez to revitalize their careers (for example, Frank Duveneck and Denman Ross) or simply to pay tribute to the master (for example, Richard Miller). In his influential book *Promenades of an Impressionist*, James Huneker predicted that "Velasquez will always be modern. And when time has obliterated his work, he may become the legendary Parrhasius of a vanished epoch."<sup>27</sup>



27. James Huneker, *Promenades of an Impressionist* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 388.



# Contents of the Exhibition

1. Ruth Harris Bohan (American, 1891–1981)  
*Infanta Margarita after Velasquez*, c. 1920–25  
Oil on canvas, 50½ x 42½ in.  
Lent by Reginald C. Foster
2. Ruth Harris Bohan  
*Jeannette Peet*, 1931  
Pastel, 12⅝ x 9¾ in. (mat)  
Lent by Mrs. Rockwood H. Foster
3. Ruth Harris Bohan  
*Spanish Dancer*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 36 in.  
Lent by Charles O. Foster
4. William Merritt Chase (American, 1849–1916)  
*An Actor*, 1882  
Oil on canvas, 82 x 38 in.  
The Hampden-Booth Theatre Library, New York
5. William Merritt Chase  
*An Infanta, A Souvenir of Velasquez*, 1899  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 24⅞ in.  
Lent by Joel R. Strote
6. William Merritt Chase  
*Infanta, after Velasquez*, c. 1881  
Oil on canvas, 32 x 24 in.  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Gilmore
7. William Merritt Chase  
*The Buffoon after Velasquez*, 1881  
Oil on canvas, 11½ x 9½ in.  
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown
8. William Merritt Chase  
*Portrait of a Lady (Harriet Hubbard Ayer)*, fragment  
of a canvas belonging to the California Palace of  
the Legion of Honor, 1879  
Oil on canvas, 14 x 38½ in.  
Lent by Graham Williford
9. William Merritt Chase  
*Venice*, 1877  
Oil on canvas mounted on masonite, 7 x 7¾ in.  
Baker/Pisano collection
10. William Dannat (American, 1853–1929)  
*Aragonese Smuggler*, c. 1883  
Oil on panel, 10¼ x 15¾ in.  
Private collection, Richmond
11. William Dannat  
*Study for La Femme en Rouge*, 1889  
Oil on panel, 27 x 13 in. (approx.)  
Lent by Graham Williford



12. William Dannat  
*Sketch for The Quartette*, c. 1884  
Oil on panel,  $13\frac{3}{8} \times 13\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
Lent by Graham Williford
13. Frank Duveneck (American, 1848–1919)  
*Philip IV as a Hunter after Velasquez*, 1895  
Oil on canvas,  $75\frac{3}{16} \times 49\frac{5}{8}$  in.  
Lent by George Fox
14. Frank Duveneck  
*Portrait*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas,  $17\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{1}{8}$  in.  
Lent by Graham Williford
15. Frank Duveneck  
*Well and Water Tank, Italian Villa*, 1887  
Oil on canvas,  $25 \times 38$  in.  
Lent by Graham Williford
16. George Luks (American, 1866–1933)  
*Jenny McKean as Infanta*, 1926  
Oil on canvas,  $40 \times 30$  in.  
Lent by Dr. Adelia Moore
17. Richard E. Miller (American, 1875–1943)  
*Studio Still Life*, 1930s  
Oil on canvas,  $25\frac{1}{8} \times 21$  in.  
Lent by Gene and Mary Anne Shannon
18. Denman Ross (American, 1853–1935)  
*Count Duke Olivares on Horseback*, c. 1895  
Oil on canvas,  $37\frac{3}{4} \times 28\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University  
Art Museums, Bequest of Dr. Denman W. Ross,  
class of 1875  
© President and Fellows of Harvard College, Harvard  
University
19. Denman Ross  
*Italian Landscape with Volcano*, 1893  
Oil on canvas board,  $10\frac{1}{8} \times 14$  in.  
Lent by Graham Williford
20. John Singer Sargent (American, 1856–1925)  
*A Venetian Interior*, c. 1880  
Watercolor on paper,  $20 \times 14$  in.  
Lent by Harry and Cookie Spiro

21. John Singer Sargent  
*Study for Spanish Dancer*, c. 1882  
Watercolor,  $12\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  in. (sheet)  
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts  
Foundation for the Arts Collection  
Gift of Margaret J. and George V. Charlton in memory  
of Eugene McDermott
22. Max Weber (American, 1881–1961)  
*Las Meninas after Velasquez*, 1906  
Oil on canvas,  $10\frac{1}{4} \times 9$  in.  
Lent by Joy S. Weber





BOARD OF  
GOVERNORS  
OF THE  
FEDERAL  
RESERVE  
SYSTEM